

***Specialty Crops Block Grant Program***  
***Utah Department of Agriculture and Food***

**PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

***December 2007***

**Program Description:**

The Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 authorized USDA to provide state assistance for specialty crops. Under the statute, the Secretary of Agriculture is making available grants to be used by State Departments of Agriculture solely to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

Each state that successfully submits an application is to receive \$100,000 plus an amount that represents the proportion of the value of specialty crop production in that state in relation to the national value of specialty crop production. The state of Utah is designated to receive \$103,135.

**Eligible Grant Applicants:**

The Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) is the authorized agency to assume the lead role in the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. As such, it is the intent of UDAF to offer the opportunity for other agencies, universities, institutions, and industry or community-based organizations to apply for a portion of the Utah allocation pursuant to the rules established within the Act.

Grant funds shall be used for projects that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops that benefit the specialty crop industry as a whole. Grant funds cannot be used for projects that benefit a single company, individual, or commercial entity.

**Program Scope and Eligibility:**

To be eligible for a specialty crop grant from the State, projects must enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. *Specialty crops are defined as fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and nursery crops (including floriculture).*

Examples of “enhancing competitiveness” of specialty crops includes, but is not limited to: research, promotion, marketing, nutrition, trade enhancement, food safety, food security, plant health programs, education, buy local programs, increased consumption, increased innovation, improved efficiency and reduced costs of distribution systems, environmental concerns and conservations, product development, and developing cooperatives.

If approved, applicants become grant partners with the state of Utah and will be obligated to execute a cooperative agreement with the state pursuant to a contract between UDAF and USDA. Applicants are reminded that:

- any information obtained, data derived and reports resulting from any Federal grant, including this one, must be available to the public;
- all travel expenses approved under projects shall follow State travel requirements;
- grant funds may not be used to fund political activities in accordance with provisions of the Hatch Act;
- grant funds are to supplement the expenditures of State funds in support of specialty crops grown in the State, rather than replace State funds;
- grantees will be required to report quarterly as to whether funds received are in an interest bearing account and submit any interest income that exceeds \$100 during any quarter to AMS-USDA;
- all grantees will be required to provide a final report and submit to an audit of project activities;
- projects are for a one year duration; and,
- UDAF must be notified within 60 days of the ending date to request a time extension if for any reason the project cannot be completed within the time frame established in the grant agreement—a letter briefly explaining the need for the extension and specifying a new ending date is required.

#### **Application Guidelines:**

All applications must be submitted using the attached application form along with additional information as outlined below in order to be accepted as a complete application. Hard copy of the application must be received or postmarked no later than January 31, 2008.

The purpose of the following required information is for applicants to describe how grant funds will be utilized to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Please keep narratives short and concise. The following format is to be followed. APPLICATIONS THAT DO NOT ADDRESS EACH ONE OF THE 10 AREAS IDENTIFIED BELOW ARE NOT COMPLETE AND WILL BE DECLARED INELIGIBLE. (The acceptable font size for narratives is 12 pitch.)

1. **Application.** Available with this document and can be reproduced. To be signed by authorized representative of the project.
2. **Project Abstract.** Name the lead entity and/or individual for administering the plan, along with a concise summary of 200 words or less describing the proposed project.
3. **Project Purpose.** Clearly state the specific issue, problem, interest, or need to be addressed. Explain why the project is important and timely.

4. **Potential Impact.** Discuss the intended beneficiaries of the project, the number of people or operations affected, and/or potential economic impact.
5. **Financial Feasibility.** Provide budget estimates for the total project cost which should include the amount of the grant being requested plus matching funds and/or in-kind contribution anticipated to complete the project. Indicate what percentage of the budget covers administrative costs. (Administrative costs should not exceed 10% of the proposed budget.) Provide a justification if administrative costs are higher than 10%.
6. **Expected Measurable Outcomes.** Describe at least two quantifiable and measurable outcomes that directly and meaningfully support the projects purpose. The outcome measures must define an event or condition that is external to the project and that is of direct importance to the intended beneficiaries and/or the public. Examples of outcome measures may include per capita consumption, consumer awareness as a percent of target market reached, market penetration based on sales by geographic region, dollar value of exports, or web site hits.
7. **Goal(s).** Describe the overall goal(s) in one or two sentences for the project.
8. **Work Plan.** Explain briefly how each goal and measurable outcome will be accomplished for the project. Be clear about who will do the work. Include appropriate time lines. Expected measurable outcomes may be long term that exceed the grant period. If so, provide a timeframe when long term outcome measure will be achieved.
9. **Project Oversight.** Describe the oversight practices that provide sufficient knowledge of grant activities to ensure proper and efficient administration.
10. **Project Commitment.** Describe how you will commit to and work toward the goals and outcome measures of the proposed project.

#### **Selection Criteria:**

A selection committee established by UDAF will have the responsibility of evaluating all complete and eligible applications. Members of the Selection Committee include the Commissioner of Agriculture or his designee, the Deputy Commissioner or his designee, the Director of Marketing, and up to three other individuals as assigned by the Commissioner.

It is anticipated that UDAF will receive requests in an amount greater than allocated funds. A protocol is established to evaluate all applications and make awards to the projects that are determined to have the greatest overall benefit for specialty crops and all stakeholders. The evaluation protocol includes:

- Appropriate to the program purposes—does the project accomplish the purpose of enhancing the competitiveness of specialty crops in Utah.
- Importance or need—does the project address a significant problem or important need to an industry or the state.
- Potential impact—how many people or operations are affected and what is the overall statewide economic impact of the project.
- Financial feasibility—is the budget realistic, and will the project yield a positive return on investment.
- Matching funds—how much money or in-kind contribution is the project providing from other sources to compliment grant funds. (The project should not utilize federal funds as matching funds for this grant since the source is federal monies.)
- Goals—are goals realistic and attainable.
- Measurable outcomes—do the measurable outcomes appropriately track success in supporting the project's purpose and whether goals will be attained.
- Grant application—application is neat, follows guidelines and theme of grant in a clear and concise manner.
- Credibility—is it reasonable to expect the project to be successful.
- Timeliness—can the project be completed within a reasonable timeframe.

For additional information or to address questions, please contact Jed Christenson at the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food:

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